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THE PLACE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION

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Professor William James, of Harvard, in a public address a little over two years ago said :

There is not a public abuse on the whole eastern coast which does not receive the enthusiastic approval of some Harvard graduate. Fifty years ago the schools were supposed to free us from crimes and unhappiness, but we do not indulge in such sanguine hopes to any such extent today. Though education frees us from the more brutal forms of crime, it is true that education itself has put even meaner forms of crime in our way. The intellect is a servant of our passions, and sometimes education only makes the person more adroit in carrying out these impulses.

It may be humiliating for us to admit the justness of this criticism, but the facts compel us to do so. It must be granted that our present system of education fails in many cases to socialize the individual; and we may therefore infer that our educational system is itself still incompletely socialized. The truth is that the old system aimed chiefly at the development of the powers and capacities of the individual, treating his adjustment to the social life as wholly a subordinate matter. And the same is true of most modern scientific education. It aims chiefly at fitting the individual for individual success, not at fitting him for the service of society. The short-sighted view still prevails that the latter result—the adjustment of the individual to society—will be best accomplished by training for individual success; but this does not follow. The consequence is that our educational system still fails in its greatest purpose: it fails to produce the citizen. We are still training in our schools and colleges young barbarians by barbarian methods; and we turn them out half-socialized, and expect them to be model citizens. We wonder why it is that education fails to free us from crime, but develops among the educated frequently only more adroit

and subtle forms of anti-social action; why it is that we are now troubled, not with the highwayman and vulgar thief, but with the cultured freebooter and "grafter" of modern business and professional life. It must be evident, even to those who reflect but little, that what is wrong is not education itself, but our particular system of education.

Professor James's somewhat pessimistic remarks are justified only regarding the present situation in education. But it is high time that they awaken us to the serious defects in our educational system from the social point of view. Popular faith in education, and particularly in higher education, will be lost if our colleges and universities turn out men who prey upon society, instead of high-minded citizens who make the service of society their first aim. In other words, if faith in education is to endure and grow our educational system must be more completely socialized; that is, it must become better adapted to the work of fitting individuals for our complex social life, not simply on the side of their material needs, but especially on the side of their social duties as citizens. Education should fit individuals for full and complete membership in the social life, and not merely for individual success. Yes, it should go farther than this. It should regenerate society itself, by fitting the individual for a higher type of social life than that at present achieved. In a word, the whole end and aim of our educational system, and especially of our higher education, should be to produce, not lawyers, doctors, engineers, or mere scientific experts of any kind, but citizens who will put the public weal above private gain, and who will act as fearless leaders of the masses out of ignorance, prejudice, and gross materialism into culture, character, and idealism.

These truths are, of course, recognized by many educators, and are accepted as axioms by that school of scientific educationists which is led by Professor Dewey. But, as already pointed out, they have not yet been made the foundation principles of our system of education, and it is to be feared that their implications are not perceived by all who accept them. If the business of education is to adjust the individual to the social life, in its spiritual not less than in its material aspects, then the implication

is that the social sciences should occupy a commanding place in any scheme of education, and particularly in higher education. By the social sciences I mean those sciences which study the organization, evolution, and nature of human society in any or all of its aspects. They alone can teach the individual what his relations toward the other units of society are, how those relations have come to be, and what his duties are as a citizen. In any scheme of education which has a social aim, which aims first of all to produce the citizen, these sciences cannot be regarded as mere electives, but they must be, in some degree at least, required constants. It must be insisted that other sciences have value largely as they lead up to the humanistic sciences, or as they prepare for service in some special vocation. But as in all vocations a man is a citizen first before he is a member of that particular calling, so in his education he needs preparation for the duties of citizenship before he is trained for his profession.

But someone may say that such training in the social sciences is not necessary as a preparation for citizenship, because such preparation is secured through the practical experiences of life. It is not denied that many of the principles of the social sciences *may* be learned in the practical experiences of life, just as many of the principles of agriculture, and even of physics and chemistry, may be learned in practical life, without any use of books. But does anyone claim, on that account, that agriculture, physics, and chemistry should not be studied as sciences? The man of scientific training, who knows scientific methods, is always better prepared to cope with problems than the man whose knowledge is merely empirical. So the citizen who has been trained in the scientific study of society and its problems will be better fitted to deal with those problems in practical life than one who has not been so trained. Moreover, it must be emphasized, over and over again, that our social life is becoming continually more complex, and that preparation for the duties of citizenship, especially for social leadership, becomes each day a more serious matter; and it needs to be repeated, too, that up to the present our colleges and universities have ignominiously failed to give

this serious preparation for the duties of citizenship, have failed to socialize the individuals whom they have turned out.

It is unnecessary to point out the value of the social sciences for the lawyer, statesman, journalist, teacher, minister, and other social leaders. What we are trying to urge is the value of these sciences for all who undertake to discharge the duties of citizens in a free and self-governing nation; and therefore the need of a larger and more practical recognition of the place of those sciences in our system of education. We go so far as to say that the stability of our institutions, the progress and regeneration of society, depend upon scientific training among our educated classes in dealing with social problems. Such training, besides giving the citizen a scientific attitude toward social problems, which is more indispensable each day, and inspiring in him wise efforts toward social service, will accomplish three things which are needed for the safety of free society: it will lessen materialism, it will check exaggerated individualism, and it will insure true moral freedom.

The study of the social sciences will lessen materialism, for they throw the emphasis on the relations of men to one another, rather than on the relations of man to nature. I refer of course not to philosophical materialism but to the practical materialism, the commercialism, of the present day. All the physical sciences aim at the conquest of physical nature; and the practical arts built upon them satisfy only the material needs of man. But it cannot be repeated too often that prosperous farms, busy factories, productive mines, great engineering achievements, and even good health, are only foundations of a nation's greatness. What matters it if some mechanical invention will enable one to go from Chicago to New York in an hour, if after he arrives in New York he is certain to be plundered and robbed? The moral relations between men are much more important than their relations to physical nature. And yet so much energy and money have been given to the development of education in these physical sciences, which aim at the conquest of physical nature, that one may rightly fear that our whole educational system has been prostituted to the commercial spirit of the age. "In the

Emersonian period," as a recent writer has well said, "young men were exhorted to hitch their wagon to a star; now, they are told rather to heap it high with corn and potatoes!" The whole stress in higher education is at present thrown upon material achievement; and it is no wonder that we have become a nation of practical materialists. The needed corrective for all this, in an educational way, is to be found in the social sciences. They aim at the conquest of man over himself, at the control of social conditions and of social progress. They emphasize the higher life of man, the relation of men to one another; and they set before the student as their goal, not material achievement or individual success, but the service of man.

This brings me to the second point, that the study of the social sciences will check exaggerated individualism. Individualism, when it simply means self-development and self-direction, is of course a good thing; but when it puts first the pursuit of selfish ends, when it makes the individual a law unto himself, it becomes one of the gravest dangers of free society. Now, the social sciences show the solidarity of society, and the interdependence of all its parts. They show that no individual lives to himself, and that his acts inevitably affect the whole life of society. The exaggerated individualism of the American people, each one setting up his own wishes as his law and getting all that he can for himself, threatens to overthrow our free institutions. The needed corrective, intellectually, must be found in such a scientific study of the social life as will show the individual his place and duties in his group.

Finally, the study of the social sciences will insure the development of true moral freedom in our social life. The social sciences can flourish only where there is free thought and free speech. They are hostile to despotism, whether the despotism be that of intolerant public opinion or that of an autocrat; and despotism is always hostile to the social sciences. It is no wonder that Napoleon tried to suppress the study of these sciences in his day, and that every social and political autocrat since his time has wished to do the same thing; for these sciences involve a searching criticism of social institutions and public policies.

Now, the very breath of life of a free society is intelligent public criticism of its institutions and policies. Without this there can be no change, no progress. But intelligent criticism implies scientific criticism; that is, criticism based upon adequate knowledge and without personal bias. And this means the scientific study of institutions and social organization. If the American people are to perfect their institutions, they must maintain and develop their moral freedom, their freedom to judge and to act in accordance with conscience; and to maintain true moral freedom they must encourage the scientific study of social conditions and institutions.

To combat materialism, to check exaggerated individualism, to insure moral freedom, to secure an unbiased scientific attitude toward social and political problems, and, above all, to train every citizen for social service, it is necessary to give the social sciences an honored place in the education of all classes and professions. Science alone can never save the world, but next after religion the social sciences can do most to make this planet a fit place in which to live.